Organizational Commitment and Effectiveness: An Empirical Assessment of the Relationship and Potential Moderators

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Two studies are reported which indicate a strong positive relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. Autonomy was found to be the only significant moderator in the first study and, although it failed to reach significance in the second study, it was in the desired direction and had a significant main effect on perceived organizational flexibility.

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Organizational commitment has emerged as a major construct in organizational studies. Porter and his collegues (1974) have defined organizational commitment as a three-dimensional construct consisting of: 1) a strong desire to remain with the organization; 2) a willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization; and 3) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values. This definition implies certain specific behavioral and attitudinal outcomes for the organization: low turnover, high employee loyalty, and high performance. In other words, managers who are successful in cultivating high levels of organizational commitment among their employees should have a loyal, dedicated work force that stays with the organization and is productive.

There has been considerable research so far on the relationship between organizational commitment and employee retention (Angle and Perry, 1981; Hom, Katerberg & Hulin, 1979; Koch and Steers, 1978; and Steers, 1977). These studies found a negative relationship between organizational commitment and turnover. On the other hand, the research on the relationship between organizational commitment and performance is quite sparse and not so clear. For example, Steers (1977) failed to find a significant relationship between organizational commitment and supervisory performance ratings and, more recently, Angle and Perry (1981) found organizational commitment to be positively related to preceived organizational adaptability for employees but not for managers. Additionally, in the latter study, the two objective performance criteria (both operating ratios) were not significantly related to organizational commitment.

If organizational commitment is to continue to be an important construct, then more attention must be given to its relationship with performance. If, as the evidence seems to indicate so far, commitment does not, in fact,

reflect a strong desire to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization, then this component of the construct should be omitted. More importantly, if commitment only means organizational loyalty, then organizations may be retaining their unproductive employees. In response to this apparent lack of relationship between organizational commitment and performance as currently defined, Steers (1977) has suggested that perhaps there is a need to differentiate between "active" and "passive" organizational commitment. The passive component would be reflected in organizational loyalty and the active component would be reflected in effort and resulting in effective performance. It is this concept of active organizational commitment to which the present research is directed.

The purpose of the studies reported in this paper is to analyze and refine the important relationship between organizational commitment and performance. In particular, it is hypothesized that employees who identify with and accept and are willing to work hard toward the organization's goals and values will perceive the organization as being more effective. It is also hypothesized that the degree of freedom that employees are allowed in pursuit of their goals and the degree of support that they receive from their leader will moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness.

Background of the Relationship Between Organizational Commitment and Effectiveness

Perhaps the most relevant study to date has been the Angle and Perry (1981) empirical test of the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness. They surveyed managers and employees in 24 bus service companies and examined the relationship between organizational commitment, value commitment, and commitment to stay with the organization and

several measures of organizational effectiveness including perceived organizational adaptability, turnover, absenteeism, tardiness, and operating costs. They found that organizational commitment was significantly related to organizational adaptabity (as perceived by employees, but not managers), turnover, and tardiness, but was not significantly related to absenteeism or operating costs.

The results of Angle and Perry's (1981) study raise a number of questions. How generalizable are these findings in light of the fact that only one type of organization was surveyed? A second question relates to their use of organizational means of commitment and effectiveness levels which masks variance within organizations in terms of employee commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. Third, are there other important variables which moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness that should be examined? These researchers conclude that more complex factors be taken into consideration in future studies. The present research represents an attempt to address the questions raised by the Angle and Perry (1981) study and specificially examines some potential moderating variables which affect the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness.

Over the years, the relationship between the individual and the organization has been characterized as an exchange relationship (for example, see: Hollander, 1979; Homans, 1958; March & Simon, 1958). In essence this literature suggests that the individual agrees to contribute his or her time and effort in exchange for certain organizational rewards. One relatively recent variation of this exchange is the Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975). VDL suggests that the exchange relationship between the individual and the organization is in

large part influenced by the leader. The leader establishes a close relationship with a limited number of subordinates, referred to as the in-group. This favored group of subordinates receives a different set of inducements in their exchange relationship with the organization than do the unfavored out-group. The in-group is more likely than the out-group to be given more challenging tasks, more responsibility, and more personal support from the leader. In exchange, the in-group exhibits higher commitment to the work unit's objectives and this results in effective performance while the out-group merely fulfills their formally prescribed roles in exchange for the standard benefits and compensation.

VDL theory would predict that the close relationships that develops between the leader and the subordinate in the in-group may have a strong impact on the subordinate's attitude toward the organization and his or her perception of the organization's effectiveness. Specifically, VDL theory would say that employees in the in-group are more committed to the organization's goals and that this commitment is necessary for the successful attainment of organizational objectives. Using this line of reasoning as background information, this study focuses on if and how specific leader behaviors moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and the employee's perception of organizational effectiveness. The specific hypotheses that will be tested include the following:

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis is that employees who are organizationally committed will perceive the organization as being more effective than those who are not committed. This hypothesis assumes employees would find it difficult to be committed to an organization which they perceive to be ineffective. Conversely, employees who feel a strong identification with the organization, are personally involved in the accomplishment of the

organization's goals, and are willing to exert high levels of effort toward the organization's goals, are more likely to see the organization as being effective because of their personal stake in the success of the organization.

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis is that employees who are organizationally committed and who see themselves as having high autonomy in their jobs will perceive the organization as being more effective. As currently defined, the construct of organizational commitment includes identification with and acceptance of the organization's goals and values. Thus, it follows that when an individual is allowed a great deal of latitude in carrying out responsibilities to which he or she is committed, that individual should be more likely to perceive the organization as being more effective.

Hypothesis 3: The third hypothesis is that committed employees who receive personal support from their leader in terms of consideration and initiation of structure will preceive the organization as being more effective. This hypothesis assumes that supportive leader behavior will clarify the relationship between the employee's responsibilities and the attainment of organizational goals. When the employees are committed to these goals, perceptions of organizational effectiveness should increase.

Method

Samples

In order to test the hypotheses, two separate samples and analyses were utilized (hereafter referred to as Study 1 and Study 2). The sample for Study 1 consisted of 328 employees at all levels in a wide diversity of organizations. These organizations ranged from very small to very large and included all types of industries (manufacturing, retail, and service) and public sector organizations (government and health care). These employees

represented 84 identifiable work groups, with from 2 to 12 respondents from each group. The sample for Study 2 was a little smaller (287 employees representing 80 separate work groups), but similar in all other respects.

Measures

In both studies, the subjects completed the following instruments: the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter et al, 1974), Mott's (1972) Organizational Effectivenss Questionnaire, the autonomy scale of the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1975), and the Crowne-Marlowe social desirability scale (Marlowe & Crowne, 1964). This latter scale was administered so that the social desirability response bias could be analyzed as suggested by Ganster, Hennessey, and Luthans (1983). In Study 1 the widely used consideration and initiation of structure scales from the LBDQ-XII (Stogdill, Goode, & Day, 1962) were also administered. The psychometric properties of all these instruments have held up fairly well over the years and were found to be quite acceptable in this study as well. The α's were .92 (Study 1) and .91 (Study 2) for the OCQ; .74 and .79 for overall effectiveness on the Mott scale; .65 and .52 for the autonomy scale on the JDS; .82 and .84 on the SD scale; and .87 for the consideration scale and .88 for the initiating structure scale of the LBDQ-XIII.

Analysis Techniques

Both studies used the same analysis techniques. Mean levels of all the variables of interest were computed for the separate groups. Multiple regression anaylsis was used to examine the relationship between mean levels of perceived organizational effectiveness and organizational commitment. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the impact of mean levels of autonomy in both studies and consideration and initiation of structure in Study 1 as moderating variables through the use of interaction terms (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

Results of Study 1

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the study variables and the correlations with perceived organizational effectiveness (and its subscales).

Insert Table 1 about here

Mean levels of organizational commitment were significantly correlated with mean levels of perceived organizational effectiveness ($r = .55$, $p<.0001$). Thus, these results give strong support to the first hypothesis. The correlations between mean organizational commitment and the three subscales (productivity, adaptability, and flexibility) of the organizational effectiveness questionnaire were also significant: $r = .39$ for mean levels of perceived organizational productivity, $r = .46$ for mean levels of perceived organizational adaptability, and $r = .54$ for mean levels of perceived organizational flexibility (all significant at the $p<.001$ level). One unexpected finding was the significant ($p<.05$) inverse relationship between social desirability response bias and perceived organizational effectiveness. According to this finding, employees who are susceptible to the social desirability response bias tend to see the organization as being less effective than those who are less susceptible to social desirability.

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis. These results

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Insert Table 2 about here

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clearly show the significance of autonomy, as reported by the employees, as a moderating variable between perceived organizational effectiveness and

orf izational commitment (see Model 1 in Table 2). Thus, the second hypo sis is also supported by the data. The moderating effect of autonomy also holds up when perceived organizational productivity (one of the subscales) was the dependent variable (see Model 2 in Table 2). However, when either perceived organizational adaptability or perceived organizational flexibility (the other two subscales) was the dependent variable, the increment to R^2 caused by the interaction of organizational commitment and autonomy was not significant.

The regression lines drawn in Figure 1 illustrate the impact of high autonomy (one standard deviation above the mean) versus low autonomy (one standard deviation below the mean) on the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. This figure shows that at low levels of organizational commitment, employees with high autonomy perceive the organization to be more effective than do employees with low autonomy. At high levels of commitment, this difference disappears.

Insert Figure 1 about here

When either consideration or initiation of structure was included in the analysis, the increment to R^2 caused by the interaction terms was significant at the $p<.05$ level (see Models 3 and 4 in Table 2.) However, it is clearly the presence of autonomy and commitment and their interaction which provides the significance. Thus, there is little evidence in support of the third hypothesis, that consideration and initiating structure moderates the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness.

Although the correlation between social desirability and perceived organizational effectiveness was significant ($r = -.22$, $p<.05$), the correlation between social desirability and organizational commitment was not ($r = .18$, $p>.05$). When social desirability was incorporated into the regression analysis, it failed to have a significant effect (see Table 2). Only organizational commitment and autonomy and their interaction had a significant effect on perceived organizational effectiveness. Table 3 shows the results of this subsequent analysis. Again, autonomy had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness as well as perceived organizational productivity.

Insert Table 3 about here

Results of Study 2

Study 2 was conducted to determine if the findings from the initial study were replicable. The means and standard deviation of the study variables, and the correlations with perceived organizational effectiveness (and its subscales are shown in Table 4. The correlations between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness are again significant ($r = .38$, $p<.01$), although not quite as high as in Study 1. Nevertheless, Study 2 replicates the findings of Study 1 and that there is a positive relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. The correlation between social desirability and organizatioanl commitment was not significant ($r = .13$, $p>.10$), nor was the relationship between social desirability and perceived organizational effectiveness ($r = .15$, $p>.10$). Therefore, social desirability was again dropped from the regression analysis.

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

Table 5 shows the results of the regression anaylsis in Study 2. This time autonomy failed to have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported in this study. However, in examining the four different models in Table 5, autonomy does have a significant main effect on perceived organizational flexibility (one of the subscales of organizational effectiveness).

Discussion

These studies examined the neglected relationship between organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness. In particular, it builds on the previous research of Angle and Perry (1981). Furthermore, there is an attempt to identify factors which moderate the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness.

One of the most important findings from the present research was the strong positive relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. This relationship held across all levels of employees and all types of organizations. Also important from a methodological standpoint was the fact that this finding was replicated across studies.

In Study 1, the most interesting finding was the role that autonomy played as a potential moderating variable between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness. The analysis indicated a positive relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness both for those employees reporting a high degree of autonomy in

their jobs and those reporting a low degree of autonomy. However, this relationship between commitment and perceived effectiveness is much stronger for those employees reporting low autonomy. In other words, at lower levels of organizational commitment, employees with high autonomy perceive the organization to be more effective than employees with low autonomy. But at higher levels of commitment, there is little difference between employees with high as opposed to low autonomy in terms of their perceptions of organizational effectiveness. This finding indicates that employees who are less committed to their organization tend to see it as more effective when they are allowed a higher degree of independence and freedom (i.e. autonomy) in the pursuit of their duties. But as employees become more committed to their organization, the impact of autonomy on their perceptions of organizational effectiveness becomes less important.

In terms of VDL theory, employees reporting a high degree of autonomy would be predicted to be in the in-group while the employees reporting a low degree of autonomy would be predicted to be in the out-group. The results of Study 1 are somewhat inconsistent with the predictions of VDL theory. VDL theory would predict that employees who perceive themselves to have high autonomy would also be more committed and perceive the organization to be more effective than employees reporting low autonomy in their jobs. Figure 1 shows that this is not the case.

In addition, the results of Study 1 with regard to the impact of supportive leader behavior are also inconsistent with VDL theory. While both consideration and initiation of structure were significantly and positively related to organizational commitment, only consideration was significantly and positively related to perceived organizational effectiveness. Neither consideration nor initiation of structure by themselves or together interacted

with commitment to significantly influence perceived organizational effectiveness. When either consideration or initiation of structure was paired with autonomy, the impact of autonomy as a moderator was strong enough to carry the interaction. Although these widely used leader behaviors were not found to be significant, further research seems called for to determine if other leader behaviors moderate this relationship.

One rather suprising finding in Study 1 was the negative relationship between social desirability response bias and perceived organizational effectiveness. Since social desirability, as a response style, is generally defined as the tendency to provide socially acceptable answers on self-report inventories, one could expect more employees to evaluate their organizations as more effective rather than less effective. While the negative correlation was significant ($p<.05$), the practical implications are questionable since the social desirability response bias accounts for only 4.8 percent of the variance in perceived organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, Study 2, found no relationship between social desirability and perceived organizational effectiveness.

The attempt to replicate the significant findings of Study 1 with Study 2 had mixed results. Although the major finding was replicated (i.e. the significant positive relationship between commitment and perceived organizational effectivensss) the impact of autonomy as a moderator, was not completely verified in Study 2. Although the results were in the desired direction and there was a significant main effect on the organizational effectiveness subscale of flexibility, the role of autonomy as a moderating variable is still not completely clear. In total, however, the two studies do provide enough evidence to suggest that further research on the relationship between commitment and effectiveness include antonomy as a potential

moderator. In addition, although leadership behaviors such a consideration and initiating structure can probably be ruled out, there may be other potential moderating variables that need to be explored. In fact, there may be other factors which moderate the impact of autonomy itself on the relationship between organizational commitment and perceived organizational effectiveness.

One obvious limitation of this research was the reliance on employee self-report measures for all the independent and dependent variables. Although social desirability response bias was controlled for, and found not to be a significant moderating variable, mutiple measures including objective performance data, would be desirable. Nevertheless, the type of research reported here is a reasonable starting point for exploring the important and neglected relationship between commitment and effectiveness and some of the potential moderating variables.

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Table 1

Study 1 (N = 84 Work Groups)
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations
with Organizational Effectiveness

	$\bar{X}$	SD	Correlations with: OrgEff	Prod.	Adapt	Flex
Organizational Commitment	3.84	.48	.55**	.39**	.46**	.54**
Social Desirability	18.97	3.11	-.22*	-.23*	-.17	-.11
Autonomy	4.01	.52	.25*	.20	.17	.20
Consideration	3.68	.44	.17	.05	.22	.13
Initiation of Structure	3.69	.37	.09	-.05	.19	.02

*$p<.05$

**$p<.01$

Table 2

Regression Analysis for Study 1

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	B	t	R^2
Model 1:	Org. Commit.	1.88	3.48**	
Organizational	Soc. Des.	-.02	-.34	
Effectiveness	Autonomy	1.34	3.17**	
	Cmt. X SD	-.003	-.18	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.35	-3.14**	
	Intercept	-2.56	-1.25	.48**
Model 2:	Org. Commit.	1.81	2.38*	
Productivity	Soc. Des.	-.11	-1.10	
	Autonomy	1.67	2.81**	
	Cmt. X SD	.02	.68	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.44	-2.79**	
	Intercept	-2.05	-.72	.32*
Model 3:	Org. Commit.	1.98	3.18**	
Organizational	Autonomy	1.32	3.02**	
Effectiveness	Soc. Des.	-.02	-.32	
	Consideration	.17	.30	
	Cmt. X SD	-.003	-.16	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.35	-3.00**	
	Cmt. X Cons.	-.04	-.25	
	Intercept	-3.07	-1.26	48*
Model 4:	Org. Commit.	2.14	3.03**	
Organizational	Autonomy	1.39	3.23**	
Effectiveness	Soc. Des.	-.03	-.44	
	Structure	.35	.59	
	Cmt. X SD	-.001	-.06	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.37	-3.19**	
	Cmt. X Str.	-.07	-.50	
	Intercept	-3.80	-1.37	.48*

*p<.05

**p<.01

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Study 1

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	B	t	R^2
Model 1:				
Organizational Effectivenss	Org. Commit.	1.73	3.55**	
	Autonomy	1.34	2.93	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.34	-2.83**	
	Intercept	-2.79	-1.55	.37**
Model 2:				
Productivity	Org. Commit.	1.98	2.98**	
	Autonomy	1.64	2.62*	
	Cmt. X Aut.	-.42	-2.53*	
	Intercept	-3.68	-1.49	.22**

*p<.05

**p<.01

Table 4

Study 2 (N = 80 Work Groups)
Means, Deviations, and Correlations with
Organizational Effectiveness

	$\bar{X}$	SD	Correlations with Org. Eff.	Prod.	Adapt.	Flex.
Organizational Commitment	3.75	.49	.38**	.37**	.31**	.28*
Social Desirability	18.51	4.75	.15	.08	.20	-.0[illegible]
Autonomy	4.04	.57	.16	.16	.04	.41**

*p<.05
**p<.01

Table 5

Regression Analysis for Study 2

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	B	t	R^2
Model 1:	Org. Commit.	.30	3.29**	
Organizational	Autonomy	.02	.29	
Effectiveness	Intercept	2.64	7.09	.15**
Model 2:				
Productivity	Org. Commit.	.31	3.19**	
	Autonomy	.02	.28	
	Intercept	2.64	6.56	.14**
Model 3:				
Adaptability	Org. Commit.	.31	2.91**	
	Autonomy	-.07	-.72	
	Intercept	2.82	6.35	.10**
Model 4:				
Flexibility	Org. Commit.	.18	1.35	
	Autonomy	.38	3.28**	
	Intercept	1.92	3.42	.19**

*p<.05

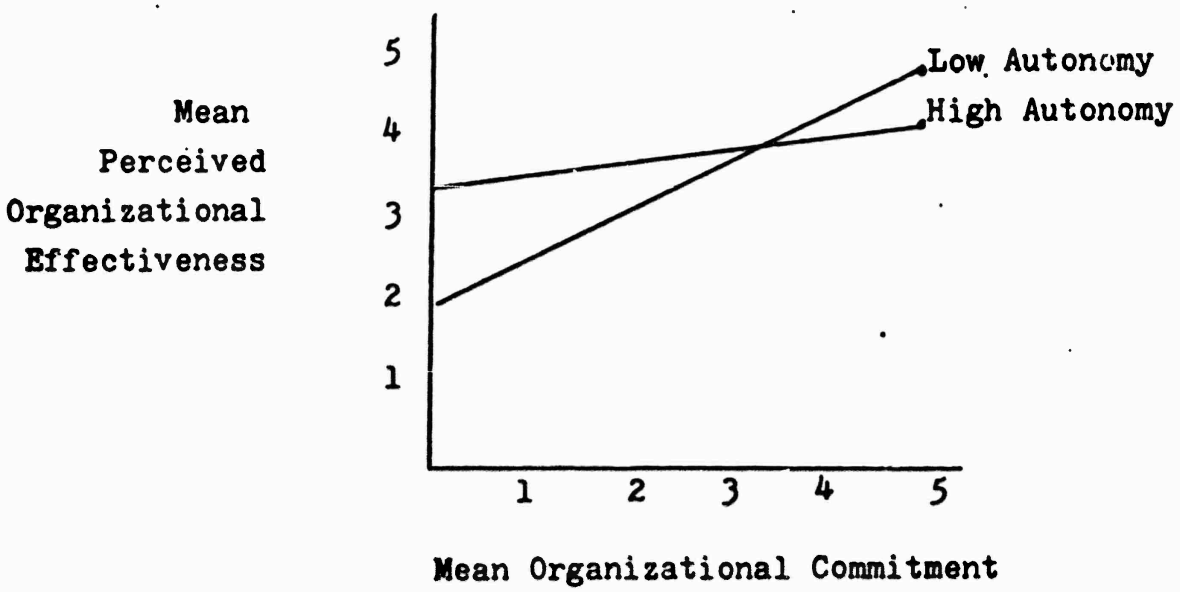
**p<.01

Figure 1

Regression Lines of

Organizational Commitment at Two Levels of Autonomy on

Perceived Organizational Effectiveness



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National Naval Medical Center
Bethesda, MD 20014

Navy Medical R&D Command
ATTN: Code 44
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LIST 6
NAVAL ACADEMY AND NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHO

Naval Postgraduate School
ATTN: Dr. Richard S. Elster - (code 012)
Department of Administrative Sciences
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School
ATTN: Professor John Senger
Operations Research and
Administrative Science
Monterey, CA 93940

Superintendent
Naval Postgraduate School
Code 1424
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School
ATTN: Dr. James Arima
Code 54-Aa
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School
ATTN: Dr. Richard A. McGonigal
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U.S. Naval Academy
ATTN: CDR J. M. McGrath
Department of Leadership and Law
Annapolis, MD 21402

Professor Carson K. Eoyang
Naval Postgraduate School, Code 54EG
Department of Administration Sciences
Monterey, CA 93940

Superintendent
ATTN: Director of Research
Naval Academy, U.S.
Annapolis, MD 21402

P4-5/A13
Sequential by State/City/FPO

452:KD:716:lab
78u452-883

LIST 7
HRM

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
Naval Air Station
Alameda, CA 94591

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
Naval Submarine Base New London
P.O. Box 81
Groton, CT 06340

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Division
Naval Air Station
Mayport, FL 32228

Commanding Officer
Human Resource Management Center
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860

Commander in Chief
Human Resource Management Division
U.S. Pacific Fleet
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
Naval Base
Charleston, SC 29408

Commanding Officer
Human Resource Management School
Naval Air Station Memphis
Millington, TN 38054

Human Resource Management School
Naval Air Station Memphis (96)
Millington, TN 38054

List 7 (Continued)

Commanding Officer
Human Resource Management Center
1300 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22209

Commanding Officer
Human Resource Management Center
5621-23 Tidewater Drive
Norfolk, VA 23511

Commander in Chief
Human Resource Management Division
U.S. Atlantic Fleet
Norfolk, VA 23511

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
Naval Air Station Whidbey Island
Oak Harbor, WA 98278

Commanding Officer
Human Resource Management Center
Box 23
FPO New York 09510

Commander in Chief
Human Resource Management Division
U.S. Naval Force Europe
FPO New York 09510

Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
Box 60
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Officer in Charge
Human Resource Management Detachment
COMNAVFORJAPAN
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LIST 8
NAVY MISCELLANEOUS

Naval Military Personnel Command (2 copies)
HRM Department (NMPC-6)
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Naval Training Analysis
and Evaluation Group
Orlando, FL 32813

Commanding Officer
ATTN: TIC, Bldg. 2068
Naval Training Equipment Center
Orlando, FL 32813

Chief of Naval Education
and Training (N-5)
Director, Research Development,
Test and Evaluation
Naval Air Station
Pensacola, FL 32508

Chief of Naval Technical Training
ATTN: Dr. Norman Kerr, Code 017
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Navy Recruiting Command
Head, Research and Analysis Branch
Code 434, Room 8001
801 North Randolph Street
Arlington, VA 22203

Commanding Officer
USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)
Newport News Shipbuilding &
Drydock Company
Newport News, VA 23607

LIST 9
USMC

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
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Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
ATTN: Dr. A. L. Slafkosky,
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Education Advisor
Education Center (E031)
MCDEC
Quantico, VA 22134

Commanding Officer
Education Center (E031)
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Commanding Officer
U.S. Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Quantico, VA 22134

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Sequential by State/City

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LIST 13
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Maxwell AFB, AL 36112

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U.S. Air Force Academy, CO 80840

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U.S. Air Force Academy, CO 80840

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AF/MPXHM
Pentagon
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Technical Director
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San Antonio, TX 78235

AFMPC/MPCYPR
Randolph AFB, TX 78150

LIST 12
ARMY

Headquarters, FORSCOM
ATTN: AFPR-HR
Ft. McPherson, GA 30330

Army Research Institute
Field Unit - Leavenworth
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Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027

Technical Director
Army Research Institute
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Alexandria, VA 22333

Director
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Director
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